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Legislative  
branch computer  
system plan

# Legislative Branch Computer System Plan

*A Report to the 56th Legislature  
from the  
Legislative Branch  
Computer System Planning Council*

October 1998

Prepared by  
Montana Legislative Services Division  
State Capitol, Room 138  
Helena, Montana 59620-1706



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## I. INTRODUCTION

A Legislative Branch (Branch) computer system plan is required by Title 5, chapter 11, part 4, Montana Code Annotated (MCA). The Legislative Branch Computer System Planning Council (Planning Council) has developed a plan in accordance with the requirements of that part. In addition, the Planning Council recognizes that a plan is necessary to direct the substantial investment in technology toward providing the maximum return and to best address the information needs of the Branch.

In developing the plan, the Planning Council recognized that planning is an active process. Publius Syrus said, "It is a bad plan that admits of no modification." (Bartlett's Familiar Quotations, 1980.) The Planning Council recognizes the plan as more a process than a product. As such, the plan also provides a process for continual evaluation, communication, and review, rather than a blueprint for a specific configuration of hardware and software.

Evaluation of existing and potential applications is both technical and managerial in nature. Recognizing this, the Planning Council relied, to a great extent, on the technical staff of the Branch to review existing systems and to recommend technological directions and solutions to identified problems. The Planning Council reviews and approves the recommendations of the Technical Planning Group (TPG) before Information Technology (IT) resources are expended.

This plan represents the collective vision, planning, actions, and achievements of both groups as well as each division in the Branch.

It should be noted that because of the Consumer Counsel's remoteness and separate and distinct mission, it has not been incorporated into this plan.

# MEMORANDUM

TO : SAC, [illegible]

FROM : [illegible]

SUBJECT: [illegible]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

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## II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of the Branch is to provide a consolidated administrative structure to support the mission of the Legislature. The Legislature's mission is to exercise the legislative power of state government vested in the Legislature by The Constitution of the State of Montana. In order to carry out this mission, the Legislature depends on the collection, processing, and distribution of information to and from individual citizens, businesses, and organizations within the state. IT plays an ever increasing role in collection of information by the Branch, as well as facilitating the analysis of that information and the subsequent distribution of the laws, policies, and conclusions of the legislative process.

In the past, IT has been successfully used by the Branch primarily to allow staff to respond more quickly to requests for information, to produce more complete fiscal and operational analyses, and to expedite and reduce the cost of information processing. Examples of these types of activities include the Bill Drafting, Engrossing and Enrolling Systems, which allow quicker and more accurate processing of new and amended bill text and the LAD SBAS System (Legislative Audit Division Statewide Budgeting and Accounting System), which has increased the efficiency of audits.

More recently, IT has begun to be used effectively to improve both the collection of information from other government agencies and the dissemination of information to the public. For example, direct access to agency systems by the LAD staff has improved audit efficiency; access to a wide variety of information on the Internet has improved the research process; e-mail response by agencies to fiscal notes has speeded fiscal note processing; and direct access by the public to the Bill Status System, the MCA on CD-ROM/Internet, and bill text on the state Bulletin Board System (BBS)/Internet has allowed, quick and direct access by interested citizens.

The Planning Council anticipates that in the future, substantial time, effort, and money will continue to be focused on the speed, quality, and reliability of the internal information processing systems that the Legislature relies on to conduct its business. As both technology and the processes of the Legislature change, these systems must be kept up-to-date to ensure their reliability and that they will continue to meet the ever-changing and ever-growing needs for timely and accurate information analysis in the Branch. It is also expected that the level

of public demand for immediate and direct access to government information will continue to grow and that this demand will consume a greater percentage of information resources than it has in the past. Finally, it is expected that the public will also request more direct input into the government process through technologies such as e-mail and interactive video conferences. These opportunities will need to be evaluated in the future based on their value and cost-effectiveness.

The Planning Council believes that the Branch is prepared to tackle these challenges in IT. An active Planning Council, supported by a well-qualified and professional technical staff, will ensure that both the processes in place and the systems that support them are reviewed and updated and that opportunities to improve public access to government are evaluated, cost-justified, and implemented when feasible. The Branch is not only communicating and working together internally, but also externally with the Executive Branch and other local, state, and national government agencies to ensure coordination. The Branch plan for automation includes guidelines and established standards that have been designed to support a smooth transition to the future as technology advances.

Technologically, the Branch is supported by a large base of valuable microcomputer technology and a replacement plan that ensures adequate and up-to-date computer hardware in the future. Software is largely standardized and current, as well. This allows the Branch to focus on consolidation of data, software customization, and information processes. The centralization of the computer network support and systems development staff, servers, budget, and other resources provides a high degree of efficiency in delivery of IT services. In addition, a major challenge to the Branch and the Department of Administration (DOA) is to upgrade the cable in the Capitol to support the current and future information communication needs. This project will be done in conjunction with the Capitol renovation project.

In order to support this information infrastructure, the Planning Council has requested one central IT biennial budget of \$2,525,157 for the Branch for computer and network needs. Based on the approval of the central budget concept by the Legislature in 1991, the Legislative Services Division has again included the central computer budget proposal as part of its budget.



Major projects/goals include maintaining the operational status of the current network and application systems, converting from Windows 95 to Windows NT (or the state standard 32 bit desktop OS), finishing Year 2000 work, MT-PRRIME interface work, and converting selected systems to Microsoft Office Suite and Microsoft Access.

Support for legislator-owned computers has been one of the more difficult issues to address over the past several years. The Planning Council anticipates growing difficulties and opportunities in this area. A considerable planning effort will be required to acquire and implement the hardware and software packages needed to provide a useful set of tools for legislators. Recognizing this fact, the Legislature adopted House Joint Resolution No. 23 in 1991, directing a specific study of the question of legislator use of computers. The study document, Study on Use of Computers by Legislators, can be obtained from the Legislative Services Division. The study concluded that although cost and year-round usage factors may preclude a recommendation for purchase of computers for all members' use in the near term, there is a great need to work toward making data services more readily available to members.

Since then, the Internet has become available and the branch has made most of the session proceedings available via the Internet. This satisfies the need for making data more readily available. There is still a need for legislators to have the tools available to access this information, i.e., an Internet-ready PC with access to the Internet. The Planning Council makes no recommendation as to whether the state should supply this or the individual legislator. This decision is left to the Legislature as a whole. The Planning Council does recognize that providing PCs to 150 legislators will require considerable planning. It would be difficult to accomplish this effort just before a session. The Planning Council recommends that if this effort is to be undertaken, that it be planned at least a session in advance.

In summary, the Planning Council believes that the Montana Legislature has taken a conservative and prudent, but effective, approach to IT use in the past. Cooperation and coordination both within the Branch and with other agencies and organizations have ensured both effective and cost-effective decisions. The plans, processes, and visions of the Planning Council, as detailed in this report, should ensure that the current investments and opportunities are successfully used and form the basis for more efficient and effective legislative processes.



### III. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

#### **Legislative Branch Computer System Planning Council**

Robert Person, Executive Director, Legislative Services Division,  
Chairman (ex officio)

Marilyn Miller, Chief Clerk, House of Representatives

Robert Nelson, Consumer Counsel

Clayton Schenck, Legislative Fiscal Analyst

Scott Seacat, Legislative Auditor

Rosana Skelton, Secretary of the Senate

Representative Jack Wells

Brett Boutin, Department of Administration, Information Services Division

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Terry Johnson, Legislative Fiscal Division

Henry Trenk, Legislative Services Division

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Steve Eller, Legislative Services Division

Beth Furbush, Legislative Services Division

Jim Gordon, Legislative Services Division

Mark Javornik, Legislative Services Division

Nan LeFebvre, Legislative Fiscal Division

Mary Longmaid, Legislative Fiscal Division

Rich McRae, Legislative Audit Division

Tom Mulvaney, Legislative Services Division

Jeanette Nordahl, Legislative Services Division

Jan Orsello, Legislative Audit Division

Rick Peaslee, Legislative Services Division

Jeff Thomas, Legislative Services Division





## **IV. LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS FUNCTIONS**

The Montana Legislature is one of three branches of state government created by the Montana Constitution. The people of Montana express their will directly through the Branch, which enacts laws, levies taxes, and appropriates revenue received from those taxes to various agencies of government for public purposes.

The structure and function of the Legislature are prescribed by constitutional law, statutes, and legislative rules. The Branch divisions established to support the Legislature and its committees are the Legislative Services Division (LSD), the Legislative Audit Division (LAD), and the Legislative Fiscal Division (LFD). The legislative responsibilities include areas such as lawmaking, appropriation, taxation, oversight of the Executive Branch, and representation of local interests. The primary function of the Legislature, however, is lawmaking, which consists of the consideration of bills. Other responsibilities of the Legislature that support its primary function include research, fiscal analysis, legislation and policy development, information distribution, oversight, and administration. These are described briefly below.

### **A. RESEARCH**

The LSD, LAD, and LFD all provide nonpartisan research services to the Legislature. The LSD staff provides reports and prepares bills for the legislators and committees. They also provide legal research and a reference library for the Branch. The Legislative Environmental Policy Office, within the LSD, provides research and analysis of environmental issues. The LFD provides research support in matters related to budgeting. The LAD is called upon to research, analyze, and report on audit issues.

### **B. FISCAL ANALYSIS**

The LFD provides an independent analysis of the Governor's budget. It also conducts research and analysis of revenue and expenditure trends and provides reports on the impact of economic changes on both enacted and proposed legislation. By performing fiscal analysis and by assisting legislators in understanding agency budgets, the LFD helps the Legislature make responsible

decisions about the collection of state revenue and the subsequent investment of and allocation to state government programs.

### **C. LEGISLATION AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

The LSD, House and Senate staff, and the LFD provide staff support to the Legislature as it proposes, debates, and makes decisions on legislation. The Central Services Office of the LSD provides clerical support for the bill drafting, introduction, engrossing, enrolling, and codifying of bills. House and Senate staff provide clerical support to committees, support the flow of bills through the House and Senate, and generally support the operation of the House and Senate.

### **D. INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION**

All legislative divisions participate in the distribution of information to the Legislature and the public. For example, legislative audit reports are available to the public, as are budget analysis, legislative fiscal, and interim reports. The Data Distribution Center in the LSD distributes all legislative proceedings in printed format to the Legislature and the public during the session. These include bills, amendments, resolutions, status reports, and journals. The Legislative Information Office provides to the public direct in-person and telephone access on the status of legislative proceedings and the daily calendar of events. The Office of Legislative Information Technology supports the systems that allow the creation and maintenance of electronic information and that make electronic access to bill status and text possible. The Legal Services Office, the Central Services Office, and the Office of Legislative Information Technology are responsible for preparing and distributing the MCA, related rules, journals, annotations, and other documents related to the proceedings of the Legislature.

### **E. OVERSIGHT**

The LAD provides oversight by regularly auditing the functions of state government and gives the Legislature and the public an independent analysis of the effect of laws and rules. These reviews allow the Legislature to analyze whether the Executive Branch or other elected officials comply effectively and efficiently with the laws and policies of the Legislature. In addition, the LAD is

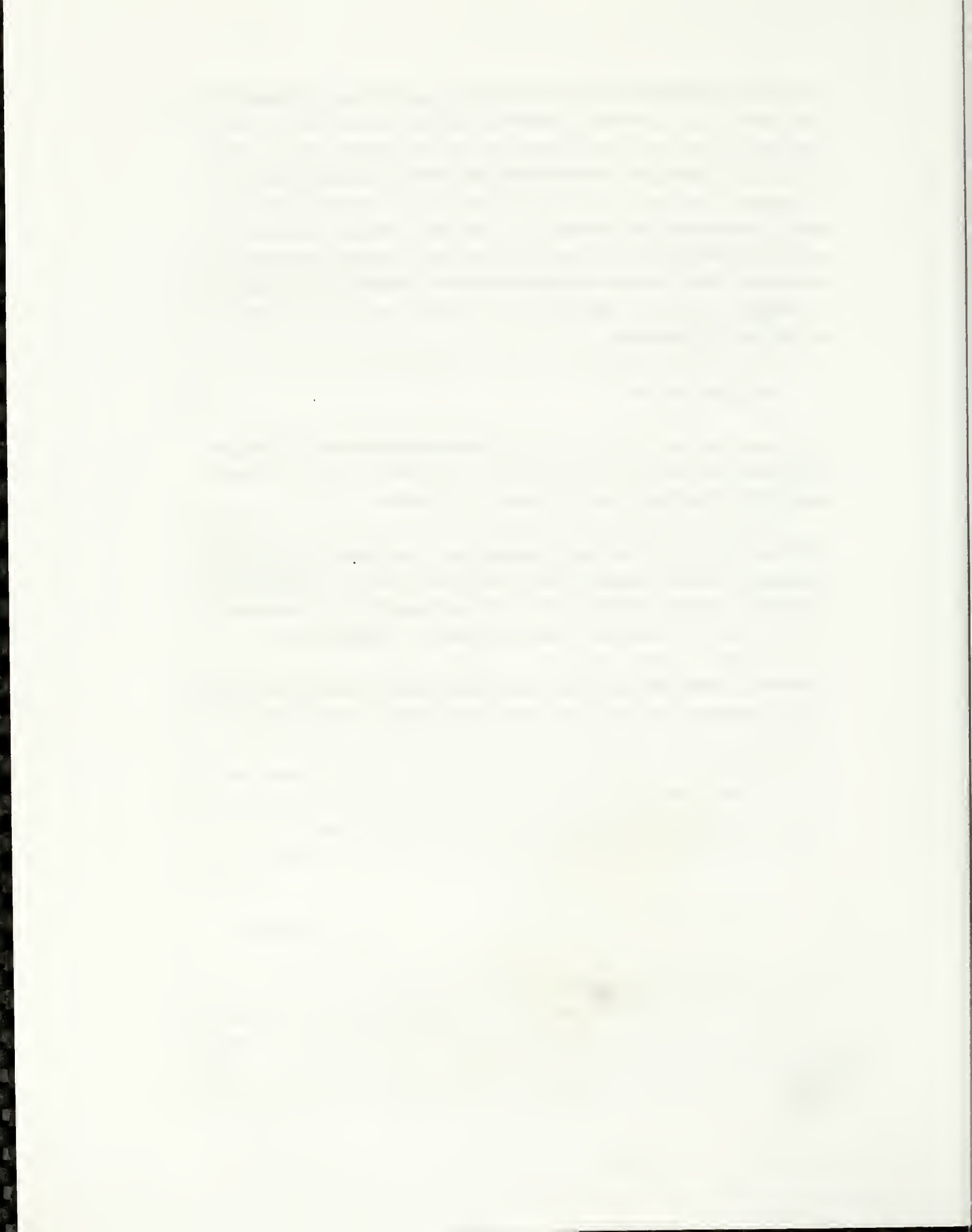
required by federal and state law and bonding agents to issue independent audit opinions on the fairness of the financial statements and the results of operations of state government agencies and of state government as a whole. The LAD also investigates reports and allegations of fraud in state government. The Legislative Environmental Policy Office serves in an oversight capacity for state government on environmental issues. The LFD is statutorily charged with oversight responsibility for the appropriations process, revenue, and other fiscal policy issues. The LSD has oversight responsibilities incorporated in support of the Revenue Oversight Committee and the Administrative Code Committee and for other like assignments.

#### **F. ADMINISTRATION**

The Central Services Office of the LSD provides purchasing, personnel, and accounting services for the entire Branch. These services help to efficiently expedite daily business issues and needs of the Branch.

Additional information on the legislative process can be found in A Legislator's Handbook, Montana Legislative Services Division (1999). In addition, the publication provides background on the relationship of the process to constituents, the media, other government agencies, and lobbyists.

The mission, goals, and objective documents submitted as part of the biennial budget process are other valuable sources of information about the Branch.



## V. IT CONTRIBUTION TO THE LEGISLATURE'S BUSINESS

The Legislature is information. All that it works with and all that it produces are information. In this information age, enhancing the ability to gather, process, and distribute legislative information more quickly and more accurately is a necessity.

The State of Montana, through its Information Technology Advisory Council (ITAC), has adopted the view that information is critical to the functioning of government. Its view is expressed in the following observation from the Information Technology Strategic Plan (July 1994):

The people of the state can benefit from information made available both by state agencies and by others, including local government agencies, education, libraries, and other not-for-profit institutions, and for-profit organizations. The free flow of information between the government and the public is essential to a democratic society. Correspondingly laws reflect increasing demands that state government be responsible for providing the public and other governmental entities with access to information an agency may possess that illuminates the operation of government itself, society, and the economy--past, present, and future. Open access to information is a means to ensure the accountability of government . . . .

Technology is the primary tool used by the Branch to collect, analyze, and disseminate information. Therefore, the Legislature is dependent on its technology. When deciding how and for what purposes to use technology, it is critical to understand how it is incorporated into the legislative process. The technology planning process, established by Title 5, chapter 11, part 4, MCA, helps ensure that the Legislature is making effective decisions about incorporating technology into the legislative process.





## **VI. CURRENT IT ENVIRONMENT**

The next four sections summarize the history of IT development in the Branch, the current organizational and technical environment that supports IT processes and initiatives in the Branch, and the accomplishments that have been made to improve legislative processes.

### **A. REVIEW OF LEGISLATIVE BRANCH AUTOMATION PROCESS**

Over the past 2 decades, the Branch has become nearly completely reliant on computer technology to administer the business processes of the Branch. From 1970 to 1985, most applications were on the state mainframe computer. The LSD, for example, used a proprietary program called Automated Legal Text Entry and Revision (ALTER) to manage code and bill text data. The advent of the personal computer rapidly transformed this environment. Stand-alone dedicated word processors were barely introduced when they were replaced by personal computers with multiple capabilities. Soon, those personal computers were linked to one another in networks, and the potential for improvement exceeded the ability of the Branch to keep up.

Recognizing the need for planning, the Senate contracted with a private consultant during the 1987-89 interim to review the situation and recommend applications. Senate planning led to implementation of a network in the Senate for the 1989 Session. The process was mirrored by the House, which implemented a limited system tied closely to the LSD system. The growth of applications in the House and Senate led to recognition by legislators and staff that integration of the systems was important to the future operation of the Legislature. Central planning for the Branch was essential in order to achieve appropriate integration.

Since recognition of the need for planning grew from the increased use of information systems throughout the Branch, some evaluation of all information systems was required. An informal review of existing systems was conducted

by the technical staff. This work clearly identified a predominant need to improve and further integrate office automation and information processing functions throughout the Branch.

The primary focus on the application of technology has been on the improvement of legislative staff productivity. Use of IT has been effective, and specific cases are noted in the IT accomplishments section.

In recent years, other agencies and lobbyists have, on a small scale, been included in direct technological access to the legislative staff and process. For example, distribution of the MCA on CD-ROM, direct TV and radio media access to some of the proceedings in the chambers, use of the state electronic BBS for information distribution, use of the Internet for public access to MCA text and session proceedings (including bill status information), and use of the state mainframe/mid-tier servers and data network to communicate directly with agencies electronically for audits and financial analysis have all expedited the flow of information to and from the Branch.

A thorough review of processes in the Branch was conducted during the FY 1996-97 biennium. This review was conducted as the first phase of consolidating the systems development function in the Branch. Other goals of this project were to determine where overlap existed in Branch processes and to determine where current technology could be applied to gain efficiency. This project took about 9 months and was completed in February 1996. A local contractor was hired to conduct the analysis. The results of the analysis were used to develop the project list and budget for the FY 1998-99 Legislative Branch Computer System Plan. For more information on the project see State of Montana, Legislative Branch, Automation Analysis Final Report.

During the FY 1998-99 biennium the branch continued to invest in technology that gives the computer user more readily available and up-to-date information. Examples of this are: the LAD SBAS system which allows LAD to print out complete financial schedules for an agency, the LAWS system which allows



online access to bill status information via the Internet, and the MBARS system which puts the state budget online.

## **B. ORGANIZATION**

In addition to a computer system plan, an appropriate IT organizational structure is necessary to effectively implement the goals of a plan. The following IT organizational structure has been established:

### Legislative Branch Computer System Planning Council

Mission: to develop and maintain a Legislative Branch Computer System Plan in accordance with 5-11-403, MCA

### Legislative Council

Mission (as it relates to IT):

to serve as the Legislature's approving authority for the Legislative Branch Computer System Plan in accordance with 5-11-405, MCA

### Executive Director, Legislative Services Division

Mission: to provide leadership to the Planning Council and provide technical staff support to the Planning Council

### Technical Planning Group

Mission: to assist the Executive Director of the LSD and the Office of Legislative Information Technology staff in providing technical planning support to the Planning Council

Its input ensures the Planning Council that goals are achievable, that everyday needs are met, and that significantly major issues are addressed. This group includes staff from each legislative division responsible for IT services within their own divisions

#### Technical Implementation Planning Group

Mission: to coordinate the divisions' input on priorities regarding Branchwide strategies for implementing technological solutions while keeping employees informed of projects, issues, and developments and relaying to TPG significant concerns and problems.

Once specific IT goals and objectives have been established, this group works out the details of implementing the technology so that it meets the needs of the Branch. For instance, when the Branch decided to consolidate on one network, this group determined the drive assignments and directory structure for that network. This group includes IT staff and technical representatives from each legislative division.

#### Office of Legislative Information Technology

Mission: to play the lead role in implementing the computer system plan established by the Planning Council and adopted by the Legislature

To accomplish this objective, this office houses the Network Services and System Development IT staff. The Office of Legislative Information Technology works in cooperation with TPG, TIPG, and the divisions' leadership to implement technology for the Branch. Also, through this staff, coordination is provided

for information services and relationships with outside groups, such as the general public, lobbyists, and other agencies.

The Planning Council has also developed reliable ways of coordinating with other agencies and organizations. For example, participation by the Executive Branch, through the DOA, in the Planning Council activities ensures constant communication on state system compatibility. The Planning Council recognizes the need to ensure compatibility as a legal requirement, to minimize purchase and support costs, and to facilitate information access. Participation by the Branch in the Information Technology Advisory Council (ITAC) and the Information Technology Managers Council (ITMC) organizations keeps the Planning Council in touch with the directions of not only Executive agencies, but also the Judiciary, other elected officials, the University System, and the cities and counties.

The Branch relies on the DOA to provide and operate the data and telecommunication networks within the Branch as well as connecting it to the "outside world". The relationship allows the Branch to focus its limited staff resources on collecting, analyzing, and communicating information rather than on maintaining and operating the network infrastructure.

### **C. IT EQUIPMENT**

The technological equipment implemented in the Branch puts the Branch in a good position to tackle the first part of the next decade. The paragraphs that follow briefly describe the technology used in the Branch.

#### **1. Computer Hardware**

The Branch has determined that most of its internal computing needs can be met cost-effectively using microcomputer hardware. Currently, there are approximately 200 desktop/laptop PCs in the Branch network. These PCs are connected to one branch file server.

The Branch will continue to rely on the state mid-tier services (operated by the DOA) for large statewide systems, such as MT-PRRIME. The mainframe is also being used for a few Branch systems, such as the MCA codification process. The Branch also leases Oracle server services from the DOA for the LAD SBAS, Information Request System, and the Bill Status System.

## **2. Computer Software**

The Branch has standardized its microcomputer software. These standards are the same as those used by the Executive Branch on major projects. Appendix C contains the Branch software standards. The Branch is beginning the process of converting to the MS Office Suite. For this reason, both the old standards and the new MS Office Suite standards are listed.

## **3. Telecommunications**

The token-ring Local Area Network (LAN) and the SummitNet Wide Area Network (WAN) provided by the DOA provide a fast, efficient pathway for data network traffic within the Branch and to the "outside world". The Branch expects to make significant use of the Internet and significant, but decreasing, use of the BBS for contact with the public through this network. The cable used in the Capitol, however, is substandard. This inhibits the expansion of the network to new uses and offers a significant risk to the continued reliable operation of nearly all the Branch's IT activities. Current plans are to upgrade the data and communication wiring infrastructure in the Capitol as part of the Capitol renovation project.

## **D. IT ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

The Branch has made numerous technological achievements. Descriptions of several of the major achievements are delineated in the pages that follow. The descriptions also illustrate Branch reliance on IT resources. See Appendix B for FY 1998-99 specific IT accomplishments.

## **1. Information Collection**

- The Branch has installed LANs, using state and Branch standards. These networks have been attached to the state data network and can communicate with each other and with the state mainframe/mid-tier. Branch staff, working at various state agency sites, can attach to the Branch LANs via the state data network. This improves productivity by allowing the transfer of information easily without travel time to and from the office. A number of the achievements listed below could not have been accomplished without these networks.
- Several mainframe and Oracle client/server programs have been developed and enhanced to help evaluate the state agency financial information maintained on SBAS and PPP.
- The Branch has issued seven EDP audit reports on state agency controls of information resources and agency use of information resources.
- The cataloging system for the LSD Library has been automated, which has improved access to data.

## **2. Information Analysis**

- The Branch has standardized on PCs for information analysis. This microcomputer standard (for the client processor) provides the most computer power for the lowest price. The Branch has also implemented client/server technology for many of the Branch core systems.
- Use of the analysis tools provided on the PC has resulted in increased productivity and quality of the audits completed by the LAD. For example, downloading state agency SBAS information into an Oracle



database provides the audit staff with the ability to more quickly and easily conduct analysis and complete audit testing.

- Several improvements have been made to the bill drafting process by applying automation. The bill drafters now use PCs to draft bills instead of manual methods. This has resulted in increased staff productivity and has allowed data entry staff to work on other projects. A bill conflict check has also been implemented, which indicates when multiple bills are amending the same section of code. A bill drafter can then check to ensure that the amendments do not conflict.
- The bills process, a mainframe operation from 1973 to 1993, has been converted to run on the PC network using WordPerfect. The print formatting capabilities of WordPerfect have produced a more readable and more flexible bill format than was possible before. Also, it will be easier to hire and train qualified bill processing session staff because WordPerfect is so widely used for word processing. A third benefit is that public access to the text of bills may be more easily supported (i.e., by placing the text, with only minor conversion, on the Internet/BBS).
- Several improvements have been made to the legislative budget analysis and tracking process. Better analysis is being provided through use of the personal computer and its analysis tools, such as Lotus/Excel, Lotus Approach, MS Access, and Oracle. Also, the time necessary to engross the general appropriations bill has been reduced from 3 or 4 days to 1 or 2 days.
- The revenue estimating system continues to be refined. The impact of a single factor changed by the Revenue Oversight Committee or the Legislature can be reflected throughout the revenue estimate with minimal analyst effort, allowing time for more focus on the analysis rather than on the procedural aspect of revenue forecasting.

- Flowcharting software is used by audit staff to document state agency processes. This helps audit staff more easily gain an understanding of the processes and allows for easy update or modification when processes change.

### 3. Information Dissemination

- The House and Senate voting system software has been upgraded to allow it to be run on standard PCs. This has made it easier for staff to support the system because they already have PC expertise. Implementation of these systems has resulted in integration of the vote and agenda functions, thus requiring only one operator instead of two, as needed before. Since both voting system PCs are attached to the Branch network, it is easy to transfer the votes to the journal, which is also input on a PC on the network. Both the House and Senate vote systems also use the network to print votes on the network printers in the House and Senate main offices.
- A bill status/bill tracking system has been implemented and is continually being enhanced. This system helps the House/Senate leadership and staff manage the flow of bills through the Legislature so that bill processing deadlines can be met. It also provides the public with a means of tracking the legislative process.
- The entire MCA camera-ready process is now done by legislative staff using a PC-based system and laser printers. This has resulted in significant cost savings and no additional FTEs. The full text of the MCA is stored on CD-ROM. This electronic storage version provides an alternative to publishing the MCA in hardbound version. Purchasers of the MCA CD-ROM can use parts of the MCA in briefs, memos, reports, etc., without having to rekey the text. In addition, the MCA CD-ROM provides a means of searching the MCA text for specific words or phrases.

- Preparation of the daily journal is now done on PCs at the rostrum. The old method required the rostrum journal staff to prepare the journal in written form for input by data entry staff. The new method has resulted in more timely preparation of the journal and a reduction in staff time needed to produce the journal. The journal is disseminated primarily in electronic form.
- Several improvements have been made to the amendments process. The amendments are now printed centrally in the amendments coordinators' offices. Special forms, and the printing costs associated with them, are no longer required. The general format of the amendment is maintained on the PC word processor. Amendments are prepared by a bill drafter, reviewed by an editor, and sent to the amendments coordinators through the existing computer network. This has resulted in amendments being more accurate and timely.

All amendments go through the amendments coordinators and are then stored on the network. This stored copy is used to display the text of amendments on the House and Senate display boards during second reading. The text of amendments is also used by the engrossing staff when engrossing bills. This prevents having to rekey long amendments.

- The Branch has made extensive use of the Internet/BBS to distribute information about the Legislature. As an example, bill status and bill text information is available on both the Internet and the BBS.
- Using state standard software has allowed the Branch to obtain electronic information directly from state agencies without having to rekey it, thus maintaining the integrity of the data.



## VII. IT DIRECTION AND VISION

The Planning Council has a two-part vision for the Legislature's use of IT:

1. To provide for the efficient, timely, and effective operation of the business of the Legislative Branch in order to support its various functions;
2. To continually apply and improve IT to help minimize impediments to the collection and dissemination of public policy information to all interested parties.

The second part of this vision is consistent with the ITAC's vision for Montana, mentioned in the Information Technology Strategic Plan (July 1994). A task force recommended in that report:

. . . the state [of Montana] should adopt a vision . . . that would guide information technology planning and development to take advantage of current and future service delivery and/or access technologies for citizens in their homes, businesses, schools, libraries, and organizations.

In continuing to expand and change the existing IT environment to meet both of these goals, the Planning Council is seeking an integrated information system that supports the information needs of the Montana Legislature and the public.

As the system is developed, constant additions of reports and data maintained for download are foreseen. A migration toward a single graphic system interface that will present appropriate information and services to the different user groups is envisioned. The internal technical infrastructure of the Branch system will also be integrated to the extent that the greatest efficiency is achieved.

Ultimately, there will be one common system look and feel for all system users for text, video, graphics, etc. Users will be able to sign on to the system and

work their way through a series of choices or go directly to a predetermined choice quickly and easily.

## VIII. IT ACTION PLAN FOR THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

There are several important tenets to any successful plan. First, it must seek to move toward a long-term vision. Second, it must consist of relatively long-range goals or milestones. Third, it must accomplish short-range tasks to move the organization toward these long-range goals and, ultimately, its vision. Finally, the plan must provide a continual process of reviewing the findings of the short-term tasks in light of changes in the needs and opportunities of the organization. This process is provided for by the charters of the Planning Council, the TPG, the TIPG, and the Office of Legislative Information Technology, as well as the legislative review of this plan. The short-term tasks that have been identified are listed below.

### SHORT TERM (BIENNIAL PLAN)

The following is a brief description of the tasks identified for the FY 2000-01 biennium and their benefits. Additional information can be obtained from the Office of Legislative Information Technology staff.

#### **A. MAINTAIN THE OPERATIONAL STATUS OF THE CURRENT NETWORK AND APPLICATION SYSTEMS -- \$1,984,770**

- Continue to upgrade software packages (MS Access, Oracle Browser, WordPerfect, etc.) to keep them on currently supported releases. Continue to fix and maintain PCs, servers, printers, etc. Continue to attach Branch PCs, servers, printers, etc., to the state backbone network.
- Continue to phase out old and technically obsolete hardware. The Branch has established a 4-year life span for PCs. In the planning, purchasing, and budgeting process, the Branch will replace PCs and PC-peripheral equipment after 4 years of use. With a 4-year life span, 25% of the PCs in the Legislative Branch must be replaced every year. The

Branch has also established a replacement cycle of 4 years for network file servers. A replacement cycle of 4 years has also been established for printers. Printers are largely mechanical devices and as such are subject to breakdown after long usage. They also become technically superseded by newer printers after about 4 years.

- Convert the Branch to Windows NT (or the chosen state standard desktop operating system). The Branch is currently on Windows 95. With the introduction of Windows 98, support for Windows 95 will begin to wane. It is anticipated that Montana state government will adopt Windows NT as the replacement desktop operation system for Windows 95. In order to obtain adequate support from ISD and PC software vendors, the Branch will need to convert to Windows NT (or the chosen state standard desktop operating system).
- Maintain current application systems. The Branch has used Oracle (and other software development tools) to develop several customized systems. Examples are the Information Request System, the Audit Billing System, the Legislative Automated Workflow System (LAWS) and the LAD SBAS System. Customized systems require periodic maintenance, i.e., programmers must periodically adjust the programs to make them run properly. Full-time staff or contracted services, or both, will be used to maintain the operational status of the Branch application systems. Additionally, the Branch leases Oracle server services from ISD for several Branch Oracle systems. This lease is also necessary to maintain operational status.
- Continue to support the centralization of IT staff and ensure the development of staff capabilities to effectively use the ever-changing technology and to understand and provide IT solutions to meet the needs of the Branch.

- Prepare a disaster recovery plan for the Branch network and Branch application systems. A disaster recovery plan will assess the risk of a prolonged outage of computer services to the Branch and provide a plan to minimize that risk in a cost-effective way.
- Perform an audit of IT Systems in the Branch to ensure that they are complying with proper IT development and operational standards.

**B. YEAR 2000 COMPLIANCE -- \$20,937**

- In 1997, the Branch conducted an assessment of its Year 2000 risk. A contractor was hired to help conduct the assessment. The Assessment Report indicated that there were 13 systems in the branch that needed Year 2000 work. These systems are: Annotations Update, MCA Update, Vote Systems for the House and Senate, Revenue Estimation, Publications Management, File Management, Time/Cost Accounting, MEPA Document Retrieval, Network Server Software, Legislative Audit Management System, Montana Integrated Budget System, and computer hardware and desktop application software. Since 1997, several of these systems have been fixed or replaced. Year 2000 work that cannot be completed in the current biennium are the Vote System for the House and Senate, the File Management System and the MEPA Document Retrieval system.

**C. MT-PRRIME INTERFACE/STATE STANDARD COMPLIANCE -- \$519,450**

- With the implementation of MT-PRRIME, several legacy systems which interfaced to the SBAS and existing Revenue systems need to be rewritten to interface with MT-PRRIME. These systems are the LAD SBAS System, and several ad hoc systems used by LFD to analyze expenditures and revenue.



- During the FY 1998-99 biennium, Montana state government changed the standard for desktop word processor, spreadsheet, and presentation software from WordPerfect, Lotus, and Freelance to the Microsoft Office Suite (the initial purchase of Microsoft Office Suite was funded through ISD and not the Branch). State government also selected Microsoft Access as its midlevel database software. The Branch began the conversion to Microsoft Office Suite during the FY 1998-99 biennium. Microsoft Office Suite was installed on all permanent staff PCs. However, the major part of the conversion involves converting the WordPerfect and Lotus macros. The branch has an extensive investment in WordPerfect and Lotus macros. Although a small part of this conversion was planned for the FY 1998-99 biennium with the conversion of the LAD Audit Reports macros, and several dBase systems, the Branch still has a majority of the conversion effort to complete. The Branch will take additional steps toward conversion to Microsoft Office Suite during the FY 2000-01 biennium by converting all LSD office related macros, several dBase systems, and the LFD revenue estimation system, which is a complex set of Lotus macros. The conversion effort will be completed with the conversion of the LAWS system during the FY 2002-03 biennium. The Branch will probably take longer than most state agencies to convert entirely to Microsoft Office Suite. This is because of the substantial investment that the branch has in WordPerfect and Lotus macros. Since this is a strategic direction for the state, the Branch will take a strategic amount of time to make the conversion.

#### **D. CAPITOL RENOVATION**

- The Branch anticipates some lost productivity during the move out of the Capitol building to accommodate Capitol renovation. All of the Branch personal computers and file servers will need to be moved. Branch IT personnel may have to support staff in two locations (Capitol building and the remote site) as opposed to one location as before. If this

scenario comes about, IT support costs will increase. The Branch continues to work with DOA on the move issues. The Branch hopes to have all of the issues and costs associated with the move identified and budgeted for (in DOA Capitol Renovation Budget) in order to alleviate lost productivity for Branch personnel.

By accomplishing these tasks, the Branch will make major headway in making IT processes more dependable and efficient. The Branch will also make important contributions to the legislative process by increasing public access to and participation in government.





## **IX. FY 2000-01 CENTRAL COMPUTER BUDGET PROPOSAL**

In order to implement any action plan, the necessary IT resources must be clearly identified. This budget proposal identifies the hardware, software, supplies, and contracted services necessary to achieve the Branch goals outlined in the plan. Appendix D contains the details of the budget. The total amount budgeted for the biennium is \$2,525,157.



## APPENDIX A



## Montana Code Annotated 1997

### Title 5, chapter 11, part 4

#### Computer System Planning

**5-11-401. Purpose.** It is the purpose of this part to establish a mechanism for computer system planning encompassing broad policy needs, long-term direction for computer use, and the effective implementation of a detailed plan for the legislative branch. It is the purpose of the plan to assure coordination of information system decisions so that the overall effectiveness of the senate, the house of representatives, and legislative agencies may be improved. It is the further purpose of the plan to enhance the coordination of legislative branch systems with executive branch systems wherever possible.

**5-11-402. Legislative branch computer system planning council.** There is a legislative branch computer system planning council composed of:

- (1) the secretary of the senate or another representative of the senate designated by the president;
- (2) the chief clerk of the house of representatives or another representative of the house designated by the speaker;
- (3) the sergeants-at-arms in the two houses or another representative of each house designated by the presiding officer of the legislative administration committee of that house;
- (4) the executive director of the legislative services division, who shall chair the planning council;
- (5) the legislative auditor;
- (6) the legislative fiscal analyst;
- (7) the consumer counsel; and
- (8) a person designated by the director of the department of administration to represent the data processing policy and planning functions of the department, who shall serve as a nonvoting member of the planning council.

**5-11-403. Duties of legislative branch computer system planning council. (1)**

The legislative branch computer system planning council shall develop and maintain a legislative branch computer system plan. In developing and maintaining this plan, the planning council shall:

(a) continuously review or have reviewed existing information systems that are candidates for automation or enhancement, as well as review existing automated systems that may be improved or integrated with new applications;

(b) develop and maintain a description of functions or services in the legislative branch and its agencies that would, through application or improvement of computer technology, provide better service to members of the legislature, legislative agencies, and the public;

(c) develop and maintain a ranking of needs, taking into consideration the relative effectiveness and probable cost of alternative systems; and

(d) develop and maintain recommended system standards for the legislative branch and standard or custom software and hardware solutions appropriate to the needs and environment of the legislative branch and its agencies.

(2) To the extent possible:

(a) future applications should be explicitly identified in the plan;

(b) current applications should allow a high degree of flexibility so that future applications are not limited; and

(c) both current and future applications should be coordinated and compatible with the standards and goals of the executive branch established under 2-17-501 through 2-17-503, as well as the legislative branch standards developed in accordance with the requirement in subsection (1)(d).

**5-11-404. Technical support. (1)** The executive director of the legislative services division shall provide technical staff support to the legislative branch computer system planning council. In performing this duty, the legislative services division shall assist the planning council by:

(a) developing or having developed analyses of existing and alternate systems;



(b) providing technical solutions and advice related to the standards set by the planning council;

(c) assisting in assessing benefits and costs of optional solutions;

(d) apprising the planning council of developments and directions in the industry;

(e) maintaining a liaison with and informing the planning council of plans and directions within the executive branch; assisting in the selection and purchasing of supplies and equipment; and

(f) providing other assistance as may be requested.

(2) The executive director shall encourage participation of appropriate personnel of the senate, the house of representatives, and other legislative entities in the provision of technical support.

**5-11-405. Legislative branch computer system plan -- adoption.** The legislative branch computer system plan must be approved and adopted by the legislative council.

**5-11-406. Legislative branch systems -- conformity to standards.** Computer hardware and software systems installed by the senate, the house of representatives, and legislative branch agencies must conform to standards established in the legislative branch computer system plan in effect at the time the purchasing decision is made.



**APPENDIX B**



## 1998-99 Biennium Legislative Branch IT Accomplishments

The projects and tasks described below have been accomplished during the 1998-99 biennium. Some of these tasks are the result of initiatives taken 4 to 5 years ago. Other tasks were started more recently, but all have taken significant effort and resulted in significant achievement in the 1998-99 biennium.

### 1998-99 IT Achievements

- The branch has converted from Windows 3.11 to the Windows 95 environment. Windows 95 is the state desktop standard operating system. Windows 95 is a much better interface to the computer than Windows 3.11, therefore the Branch should see a slight productivity gain out of this conversion. Also, this conversion is necessary since Microsoft is dropping support for Windows 3.11.
- The Branch worked in conjunction with the Office of Budget and Program Planning to implement a new budget development system, Montana Budgeting and Reporting System (MBARS). MBARS will allow agencies to input their budgets into the system and allow both Office of Budget and Program Planning and the Legislative Fiscal Division better and more timely access to the data to perform an effective analysis of the data.
- The Branch has increased the amount of data available to the public via the Internet. The current text of bills and the journal are now online, as well as the text of the MCA. Legislative Audit Division now has audit reports available and the Legislative Fiscal Division has put the budget book on the Internet. During the 1999 session, for the first time, online bill status information will be made available via the Internet.

- The computer systems that support bill status, bill drafting, engrossing, enrolling, the journal, committee minutes and amendments have been rewritten using the latest computer technology. These systems were on 10- (or more) year-old technology. This project is the LAWS project. LAWS stands for Legislative Automated Workflow System. The new system has an Internet interface to bill status information. Bill drafting, engrossing, enrolling, journal, committee minutes, and amendments processes will move to a Windows interface from the old DOS interface. This system will provide more readily available access to session data.
- The LAD SBAS system was significantly enhanced. Auditors can now get a complete financial schedule for an agency by just entering the agency number and the year. The capability was also added to drill down to the transaction level when a question arises about an expenditure. This system has significantly increased efficiency in conducting an audit of an agency.
- The Branch conducted a thorough analysis of it's Year 2000 problems. Each computer system in the Branch was looked at to determine if it had a Year 2000 problem and to what degree it had the problem. Approximately 10 of the 13 systems needing fixes were scheduled to be replaced or fixed in the FY 1998-99 biennium.
- The Branch implemented a system (Information Request System) to track requests from the public and from legislators for information that the Branch provides. This system will help managers in the Branch better manage this workload and prevent staff from working on duplicate requests.
- The Branch began the conversion to the new state standard desktop suite, Microsoft Office. Some agencies in the Branch are moving ahead with this conversion faster than others.



- The Branch has worked extensively with the MT-PRRIME team to implement this new system statewide as well as in the Branch.



## APPENDIX C



## Legislative Branch Standards

The following standards have been adopted for the Branch. All legislative divisions are required to follow these standards for new purchases or to convert to these standards when it is most cost-effective. These standards are periodically reviewed and updated as Branch needs or state and computer industry standards change.

<u>Application</u>	<u>Standard</u>
Word Processing	Microsoft Word and WordPerfect
Spreadsheet	Microsoft Excel and Lotus 1-2-3
Data base	Oracle for large development projects. Microsoft Access for midlevel development projects. Lotus Approach for low-end user development and data analysis.
Desktop Publishing	Ventura Publisher
Presentation	Microsoft PowerPoint
Desktop OS	DOS/Windows 3.1, Windows 95/Windows NT
3270 Emulation	Attachmate EXTRA!
E-Mail	Zip!Mail/ZIP!Office and Outlook/Exchange
Modem hardware	Hayes compatible
Dialup software	PC Anywhere
LAN Operating System	Novell NetWare
Computer Hardware	State Term Contract PCs

All legislative divisions are to maintain, when feasible, the same release level for each software standard. Transition from older software applications to current standards is provided for in the plan.

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**APPENDIX D**









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